



Tradewinds 2009



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25th annual Tradewinds Exercise begins in Bahamas

By Staff Sgt. A.C. Mink

NASSAU, Bahamas – More than 400 U.S. service members, Caribbean nations' security forces personnel and British Royal Marines, as well as numerous Caribbean nation officials were on hand for the opening ceremonies of the 25th annual Tradewinds exercise here, March 4.

"This exercise is yet another demonstration of the U.S. government's commitment to the peace and security of the Bahamas, the Caribbean Region, and the Western Hemisphere through a continuous program of cooperation among all partner nations," said Timothy Zuniga-Brown, Charge d'Affairs, U.S. Embassy, Bahamas, in his opening remarks.

Tradewinds is a Chairman of the Joint Chiefs directed, U.S. Southern Command-sponsored annual exercise, designed to improve cooperation and interoperability of Partner Nations in responding to regional security threats.

"The Tradewinds exercise, now in its twenty-fifth year, has established itself as an essential and dynamic collaborative framework for improving cooperation and inter-operability among participating countries, to confront head on, grave security challenges in the Caribbean region," said Hon. O.A. "Tommy" Turnquest, Minister of National Security, Bahamas and guest speaker of the event.

During his remarks, Turnquest thanked the U.S. government and Southern Command for its support through Exercise Tradewinds, and the Enduring Friendship program, through which the nation received four interceptor vessels to help strengthen the defense force's security efforts.

"The focus of this year's activities on maritime interdiction is critical and timely, and is in line with our determination that every effort should be made to prevent a significant upsurge in drug trafficking in the Caribbean region," said Turnquest.

U.S. Marine Corps Lt. Col. Trent Blackson, Marine Corps Forces, South exercise director, emphasized the effect of the cooperative effort.

"Exercise Tradewinds 2009 provides an excellent opportunity for our forces to train together to counter the illicit trafficking threat," said Blackson. "We have brought together a team of experts with wide-ranging skill sets, to improve our collective capability across the Caribbean Basin to stop the flow of illegal narcotics, weapons, explosives, terrorists and human trafficking."

Given those issues affecting maritime traffic, as well as the areas vulnerability to natural disasters such as hurricanes, Turnquest said he is “pleased with the focus on search and rescue operations, with emphasis on command and control,” and is “convinced the training will provide invaluable expertise and experience for all participants.

Tradewinds 2009 is a maritime operations exercise that supports USSOUTHCOM’s theatre security cooperation objectives and exercises the assets and capability provided under the Enduring Friendship program. Enduring Friendship is a USSOUTHCOM-sponsored program to build maritime security capabilities throughout the Caribbean. The program provides high-speed interceptor boats with extensive communication and surveillance suites, as well as a command, control and communication package that links U.S. Joint Interagency Task-Force South (JIATF-S) with partner nation’s operations centers to track and coordinate seizure of illicit maritime traffic.

The nations participating in Exercise Tradewinds 2009 include Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Jamaica, Nicaragua, St. Kitts-Neves, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and Grenadines, Suriname, Trinidad-Tobago, the United Kingdom and the United States.

Tradewinds 2009 includes personnel from the U.S. Marine Corps, Coast Guard, Army, Navy, Air Force, National Guard, JIATF-S, Naval Criminal Investigative Service (NCIS) and Drug Enforcement Administration. Additionally, partner nations’ maritime security forces, Royal Marine Commandos and the personnel from the Caribbean Regional Security System will participate.

High resolution imagery is available online at www.hq.southcom.mil.

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